

Michael F. Easley
Governor



State of North Carolina Office of the Governor

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NORTH CAROLINA WINS INTERNATIONAL AWARD FOR SWIFTWATER RESCUE OPERATIONS DURING 2004 HURRICANE RESPONSE

RALEIGH – Gov. Mike Easley today announced that North Carolina's swiftwater rescue teams, which were deployed during last fall's hurricanes, will receive the highest international award in their field. Coordinated by the N.C. Division of Emergency Management, the teams will receive the Higgins & Langley Memorial Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Field of Swiftwater Rescue.

"During the 2004 hurricane season, our state's swiftwater rescue teams saved more than 1,110 lives," Easley said. "I am proud of our dedicated rescue personnel who put themselves in harm's way to keep their communities safe. This award is a fitting tribute to their hard work."

Easley nominated the teams for the award in April. It will be presented at 8 p.m. PST today (11 p.m. EST) during the National Association for Search and Rescue (NASAR) Conference in Oakland, CA. It will be accepted by Mike Guzo, search and rescue coordinator for the Division of Emergency Management.

Flooding is the leading cause of weather-related death worldwide. The Higgins & Langley Memorial Awards were established in 1993 by members of the Swiftwater Rescue Committee of NASAR in honor of Earl Higgins, a writer and filmmaker who lost his life in 1980 while attempting to rescue a child from a flood-swollen river, and Jeffrey Langley, a firefighter-paramedic who lost his life in a helicopter incident in 1993.

"This award recognizes the preparedness, teamwork, and dedication of our swiftwater rescue teams under extreme conditions during the seven storms of 2004," said Bryan Beatty, secretary of the Department of Crime Control & Public Safety, which leads the state's disaster response efforts. "I am especially proud of our Emergency Management and National Guard personnel. Their support and coordination was vital to the success of the swiftwater rescue teams."

The Higgins & Langley Memorial Awards are supported by NASAR, with funding provided by corporate sponsors, including CFS Press of Asheville, Rescue 3 International of Sonora, Calif., and CMC Rescue of Santa Barbara, Calif., as well as individual donors, including the families and friends of Earl Higgins and Jeffrey Langley.

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